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Readiness for Change: An Institutional Perspective

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Readiness for Change: An Institutional Perspective

ABSTRACT Drawing on a case study of an ongoing consolidation of two US school districts, we examine the potential contribution that institutional theory can make to our understanding of change readiness. In so doing, we suggest that an institutional perspective provides three major opportunities for advancement in this area. First, we argue that it allows a shift from individual to collective cognitions, thereby offering the opportunity to apply the concept of readiness to new levels of analyses. Second, we bring to the fore the interactive and recursive influences of institutions on the readiness for change of organizational constituents. Finally, in bringing attention to the role of discourse in institutional change processes, we examine the role of power in creating change readiness, an issue that is strikingly missing in the literature on change in general, and change readiness in particular.

KEY WORDS: change readiness, organizational change, public sector change, collective cognitions, institutional theory, school consolidation, power

Readiness for Change: An Institutional Perspective

Introduction

As investigations into organizational change have proliferated, so the ability to design and execute programs of large-scale transformation has been seen as central to organizational performance. Indeed, changes to the technological, economic, socio-cultural, and geo-political environments in which organizations operate have rendered the ability of organizations to negotiate periods of large-scale change an increasingly important characteristic of organizational survival. With that said, it remains something of a truism to note that organizational change is inherently difficult to accomplish with studies of private and public sector organizations suggesting that about 70% of change programs fail to be implemented as planned, if at all (e.g., Amis, Slack and Hinings, 2004; Beer and Nohria, 2000; Clegg and Walsh, 2004; Craine, 2007; Ford and Ford, 2009; Hinings and Greenwood, 1988; Kotter, 1996).

The difficulties associated with accomplishing change point to the inherent complexities involved in bringing about large-scale transformations, something that has often been lost in many of the apparently straightforward prescriptions of how change should be carried out. Indeed, a failure to capture the cultural, political and social issues incumbent in change attempts has been a point of ongoing concern for many change scholars (e.g., Heracleous, 2001, 2002; Pascale, Milleman, and Gioja 1997; Pettigrew, 1987; Plowman, Baker, Beck, Kulkarni, Solansky, and Travis, 2007). Further, while the role of individual actors has often been ignored in change accounts, those studies that have examined individual roles have often favored a leader-centric perspective that focuses on the strategic and/or personal nature of transformational leadership. This has often been at the cost of focusing attention on those lower down the

organization whose decision-making and subsequent actions will likely have a determining impact on the overall effectiveness of any change program (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio, 2008). Importantly, a developing body of literature, focused on the readiness of individuals to engage with, and realize, change, has begun to address this gap in our understanding (Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder, 1993). Change readiness has generally referred to a focus on individual cognition, those beliefs, attitudes, and intentions toward a change effort. "It is the *cognitive* precursor to the *behaviors* of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort" (Armenakis et al., 1993: 681-682, emphases in the original). Thus, research that has focused upon readiness for change has provided welcome actor-centric insights into how change takes place. Furthermore, with its particular attention on 'crafting' the appropriate change message (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis and Harris, 2002), the concept of change readiness provides an opportunity to address more explicitly the power dynamics involved in change programs, an issue that is found to be strikingly absent in the change literature (Clegg, 2010; Lawrence, 2008).

However, there remain significant lacunae that result from the content and orientation of work to date that has examined change readiness. First, with its focus on individual cognitions, there has been a general failure to account for the impact of social interactions on the change process (Barrett, Thomas, and Hocevar, 1995; Gergen, 1991; Griffin, 1987; Weiner, 2009), and more generally for the impact of higher order contextual factors on individual perceptions of, and behavioral responses to, change (Jones, Jimmieson, and Griffiths, 2005; Lewin, 1951). If readiness for change is mostly a result of cognitive or sensemaking processes (Weick, 1993, 1995), there is a need to account for the social processes at play, and to recognize that readiness for change might actually be elaborated at the group level more so than at the level of an

individual. As Barrett et al. (1995: 368) suggest, “meaning making is a shared public activity, not something that occurs in the private recesses of the mind.”

A second shortcoming concerns the limitations of studies of change that build on cross-sectional variance analyses (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Over 25 years ago, Pettigrew (1985) pointed to the shortcomings of change research that was ahistorical, aprocessual, and acontextual. More recently, several scholars have expressed a similar concern with respect to work investigating readiness for change (e.g., Dalton and Gottlieb, 2003; Weiner, 2009; Weiner, Amick, and Lee, 2009). We embrace these two concerns here, and seek to offer an alternative way to consider readiness for change by adopting an institutional lens to bring to the fore the interaction of individuals involved with change with the environment in which they are located.

Consequently, the purpose of our paper is to bring an institutional perspective to change readiness. In so doing, we seek to make three main contributions to our understanding of change readiness. First, we attend to Barrett et al.’s (1995) call for shifting the locus of meaning from the individual to the “relating”, in other words, to the overall context in which meaning is made. This brings formal recognition to the point that individuals’ cognitions are shaped by broader social discourses and institutions (Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer, and Zilber, 2010). As such, assessing readiness for change through an examination of the institutional environment that shapes such processes is likely to offer some important insights into how change proceeds. Second, an institutional approach allows us to expand the concept of change readiness from the individual-level to examining the ways in which group-, organization-, industry-, and/or field-level dynamics influence the interpretation of a change program (Weick, 1995). Third, with its emphasis on the role of discourse (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991;

Green, 2004; Green, Li and Nohria, 2009; Lawrence, 1999; Meyer and Rowan; 1977; Zilber, 2007), an institutional approach also allows us to expand the nascent emphasis researchers have placed on the role of language in creating change readiness. In particular, a focus on discourse provides access to the role of power in shaping perceptions of change. We develop our theorizing by drawing on a case study of a contentious, and on-going, merger of two school districts in the United States..

Readiness for Change: Taking Stock

In 1951, Lewin advanced the notion of “unfreezing” as one of three components of his influential transformation framework. Importantly, this provided early, explicit recognition of the role that an organization’s members’ beliefs and attitudes can have on change outcomes. Despite this early emphasis on cognition, it is only recently that scholars of organizational change have answered calls to explore the more “humanistic” aspects of change (Heracleous, 2001; Pascale et al., 1997), and to engage in approaches focused upon the change-recipient as opposed to those that are primarily leader-centric (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Ford et al., 2008). Indeed, the concept of change readiness was offered by Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999) as a means to redirect attention to the role of individual cognitions in understanding change outcomes (see also Jones et al., 2005; Kotter, 1996; Pasmore and Fagans, 1992; Schein, 1987, 1988, 1999).

Levels of Analysis

At its core, assessments of change readiness have focused upon individual cognitions (Backer, 1995; Bandura, 1982; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Walinga, 2008), an emphasis similar

to that found in the sensemaking literature (e.g., Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, and De Palma, 2006; Ford et al., 2008; George and Jones, 2001; Weick, 1995). In both literature streams, attitudes towards change are perceived to be guided by individual schema (e.g., Weber and Manning, 2001). This approach assumes that organizational change is a direct result of organization members' individual readiness for change. However, it has been pointed out that both readiness (Armenakis et al., 1993; Backer, 1995; Lewin, 1951) and sensemaking (Weick, 1993, 1995) involve social processes. Indeed, Lewin (1951) and Weick (1995) have both articulated the mutual interdependence of the elements and forces surrounding the individual, and the effects that these have on issue perception, interpretation, and subsequent behavior. As Scott (2008: 209) has noted:

the attributes and actions of a character in a play are not fully comprehensible apart from knowledge of the wider drama being enacted – including the nature and interest of the other players, their relationships, and the logics that guide their actions.

Therefore, despite the recent attention paid to individuals, and to some degree contextual and processual characteristics as constituent elements of readiness for change (Daley, 1991; Holt, Armenakis, Feild, and Harris, 2007; Lehman, Greener, and Simpson, 2002; Weiner, 2009), few studies have accounted for the combined effects of individual and contextual attributes in predicting individual readiness for change (Bouckennooghe and Devos, 2008), or more generally, for readiness as a shared, co-developed property.

Methodological Issues

A second limitation to our understanding of change readiness is the fact that most research on the subject has utilized cross-sectional studies (Eby, Adams, Russell, and Gaby 2000; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, and Welbourne, 1999; Oreg, 2006; Wanberg and Banas, 2000).

This has occurred despite regular warnings of the problems associated with studying change in this manner. Barnett and Carroll (1995), for instance, stress the importance of addressing both the content and the process of change, regretting that only one dimension is typically considered. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999), and, more recently, Jaros (2010) similarly suggest that more attention should be paid to the processual aspect of change programs. Gresov, Haverman, and Oliva (1993) have also argued for more holistic analyses of the change process rather than separate investigations of variables that have limited explanatory power. Furthermore, it has been shown that cognitive frames evolve in dynamic and interactive contexts (Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, and Humphries, 1999; Rouleau, 2005; Weick, 1993, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005), pointing to the importance of locating investigations of change in their broader, temporal settings.

Power and Discourse

While not yet explicitly accounted for, any investigation of change readiness should also allow for the role of discourse in shaping individuals' perceptions. For example, Armenakis et al. (1993: 684) have suggested, "The primary mechanism for creating readiness for change...is the message for change." The importance of language has been broadly recognized by organizational and social theorists (e.g., Berger and Luckmann, 1966; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Green, 2004; Green et al., 2009; Lawrence, 1999; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). For instance, Zilber (2007), in a study of a technology conference, examined the ways in which competing actors were able to trigger calls for changes in the institutional order through the use of particular narratives. In this sense, stories form a medium, as well as a resource, for change. As a consequence, therefore, we can see that discourse points attention to the role of power in shaping organizational

outcomes (e.g., Clegg, Courpasson, and Phillips, 2006; Foucault, 1977, 1979, 1980; Gramsci, 1971; Luhmann, 1979; Wittgenstein, 1968). In essence, discourse has been seen as central to establishing preferred organizational structures, systems, and values. However, power remains absent from most work on change in general (Clegg, 2010; Lawrence, 2008), and change readiness in particular.

We contend that institutional theory offers opportunities to develop theoretical frameworks that will allow for the exploration of how change readiness can be reconceptualized as a process that is dialectically shaped within a given context, rather than a discrete and largely constant state. Importantly, the concept of readiness can then be considered at different levels of analysis, thereby improving our understanding of higher-level readiness, augmenting the current focus on individual cognition. Such an approach also opens up opportunities to highlight the ways in which actors utilize discursive tools, specifically skillful development of rhetorical argumentation, as instruments of power that can shape their constituents' readiness for change. It is to the development of this theoretical positioning that we now turn.

Institutional Theory and Change

Institutional Theory and Collective Cognitions

Institutional theory focuses on the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. It emphasizes the processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior. While the idea of an institution connotes resilience and stability, something that formed a focus for much institutional research, more recent work has examined the ways in which institutions come to be challenged

and subjected to change (Scott, 2010). Furthermore, institutional theory informs us that individuals are not acting, thinking, and making decisions in a vacuum; rather, they are embedded in a web of interactions that help to shape their behaviors, thoughts, and decision-making processes (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Selznick, 1996).

While institutional theory has traditionally focused on macro, field-level processes, increasing attention is being accorded to advancing our understanding of the ways in which individuals' perceptions are shaped within a given institutional environment (Scott, 2008). This phenomenon, referred to as *structured cognition*, is a “very useful idea [that] reminds us that the interaction of culture and organization is mediated by socially constructed mind, that is, by patterns of perception and evaluation” (Selznick, 1996: 274). This cultural-cognitive approach is a major contribution of new institutionalism (Scott, 2008) as it allows for a better understanding of the ways in which cognitions are influenced, shaped, given stability, or challenged by higher contextual factors such as group membership (Kilduff, 1993; Simon, 1945) and the broader institutional environment.

Therefore, an institutional perspective can enrich our understanding of change readiness through the examination of those institutions that individuals primarily build upon to make sense of their environment. This will further allow us to address those calls for examining change readiness in the context of a given environment (Armenakis and Harris, 1993; Bouckennooghe and Devos, 2008; Jones et al., 2005; Lewin, 1951; Walinga, 2008) by examining the ways in which meaning comes to be made and shared (Barrett et al., 1995; Suddaby et al., 2010).

Institutional Theory and Change: A Multilevel, Processual Approach

Institutional theory not only focuses on those cognitive mappings of one's social environment (Scott, 2008; Spicer, 2011), it also accounts for the fact that institutions may have different effects depending on how they are interpreted and then reformulated within an organization (Biggart and Guillén, 1999; Fligstein, 1985; Scott, 2008; Zucker, 1983). This point has major implications for the concept of change readiness. It shows that an institutional approach allows us to not only assess readiness at the individual-, group-, organization-, or field-level, but also provides us with access to the ways in which the cognitive processes involved in change readiness constitute and are constituted by the broader institutional environment. Indeed, a major strength of institutional theory is its ability to encompass various levels of analysis, and more importantly, to examine how each level is influenced by the others in an iterative and recursive fashion (Fligstein, 1985; Giddens, 1984; Lipsky, 1980; Scott, 2008; Wilson, 1980; Zucker, 1983). These dialectical interactions allow for the processual understanding currently missing in the change readiness literature. We now build on our theorizing by exploring a case study involving the merger of two United States' school districts located in Shelby County, Tennessee.

Readiness for Change in a School Consolidation

School Consolidation in Shelby County: Background

The consolidation of school districts is generally born out of a desire to gain efficiencies through increased centralization and cost rationalization (Conant, 1959; Kay, Hargood, and Russell, 1982; Killeen and Sipple, 2000). It is therefore not surprising that the question of consolidation often emerges during economic downturns (Bard, Gardener, and Wieland, 2005; Wiles, 1994). Such reform has dramatically transformed the American education landscape with

the more than 130,000 school districts in 1930 shrinking to about 14,000 by 2010 (Berry, 2006; Ornstein, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). With the recent economic crises, some of those school systems that were left independent after previous waves of consolidation are now reconsidering the potential benefits of merging. In the state of Tennessee, two school systems, Memphis City Schools (MCS) and Shelby County Schools (SCS), have begun a process of consolidation that will result in the creation of a single school district. This case is interesting in the context of this paper in that it provides us with an opportunity to examine the multi-level processes through which readiness for change may develop.

Before moving forward, however, it is worth mentioning that although this school consolidation process shares some common characteristics with private sector mergers and acquisitions, some particularities stand out that will have major implications in the analysis of this case. First, whereas an acquisition usually involves a large organization taking over a smaller one, here the larger unit, MCS, is ostensibly being absorbed by the smaller one. Furthermore, the ‘acquired’ entity, MCS, is the one pushing for this consolidation while SCS has been vehemently opposed to the merger. That said, we do feel that our analysis has resonance with other sectors. For instance, a shift from individual to collective cognitions allows organizational change scholars to apply the concept of readiness for change to a broader universe of change programs such as mergers, acquisitions, takeovers, and other changes involving the combining of two or more groups, departments, or organizations. Further, our work provides insight into how an analysis of the institutional processes that shape collective cognitions is useful for understanding why individuals, groups, organizations, industries, fields, or societies are ready, or not, for change. This should provide insight to organizational leaders and policy-makers as they plan change interventions.

The Institutional Environment, Actors, and Interests

The general principle in place in the US is that it is the responsibility of the county administration to provide schooling for all of its resident children. Shelby County, however, has maintained the existence of two separate school systems since 1869, when the City of Memphis obtained a charter for managing its own schooling. At that time, Memphis contained predominantly white, middle-class inhabitants whereas rural Shelby County consisted of lower income, mostly African American residents. The intent of this separation was to ensure that the schools provided for white students were entirely separated from those for African Americans. These white schools were much better resourced by the white leaders in the community and were consequently of a much higher quality than those provided for African American students (Pohlmann, 2008).

Memphis continued to have a majority of white students in its schools until the mid-1960s, at which point, for economic and social reasons, the black student population became slightly greater than that of the white students. It was, however, the attempt to desegregate Memphis' schools that took place in the early 1970s that resulted in the major demographic shift in MCS and SCS. The attempt to desegregate schools by bussing black students to predominantly white schools, and *vice versa*, resulted in the majority of white residents removing their children from the City school system. These residents subsequently either moved to the suburbs and enrolled their students in SCS, or entered their children in one of the many private schools that emerged as a direct response to desegregation laws, or moved to neighboring Mississippi where desegregation was much less pronounced. Predictably, none of these strategies were feasible for the vast majority of poor African Americans. As a consequence, in a dramatic

racial and economic reversal, the population of MCS students quickly became predominantly African American and poor, while SCS had a much greater proportion of white students from more affluent backgrounds. Further, and not incidentally, schools in the SCS system have reported higher levels of academic performance than their MCS counterparts (see Table 1).

Insert table 1 about here

In 2010, the starting point of the current consolidation process, MCS had 108,317 students, 85% of whom were African American, and 87% economically disadvantaged. The SCS system, by contrast, consisted of 48,243 students 38% of whom were African American and 37% economically disadvantaged (see Table 1). The demographic differences between each system are made further apparent when we consider individual school settings. Well over half of all MCS schools contain 95-100% African American students, and over 75% are at least 85% African American. By contrast, less than 10% of SCS schools have more than 85% African American students, and over half have less than 35% (Table 2). Further, almost 75% of MCS schools that reported data have more than 90% of students classified as economically disadvantaged, while half of all SCS schools have less than 35% economically disadvantaged students (Table 3). Thus, MCS schools overwhelmingly contain students who are African American and poor; SCS have schools that, with one or two notable exceptions, contain a majority of white students who are more affluent. We can therefore see that the school systems, while separated along divisions that, at first glance, seem geographic are, in reality, grounded in deeper and more resilient institutional processes. Examining these is key to understanding the ways in which collective cognitions have been shaped, and ultimately the reasons lying behind different perceptions of the current consolidation.

Insert table 2 about here

Insert table 3 about here

The main source of funding for both systems outside of the State is the property tax that is levied on all households in Shelby County. This money is pooled and then distributed to each school in the County on a per capita basis, irrespective of which district the school is in. Memphis residents also pay a separate tax that goes just to MCS. Schools can also get additional ‘Title 1’ funding from the federal government if more than 40% of children in the school are considered ‘low income’. The additional tax on Memphis residents and the greater number of low income children has resulted in the per pupil expenditure for a student in MCS amounting to \$10,767 per year compared to \$8,439 for a SCS students (see Table 1). Protecting county-level property tax funding was cited as the most important catalyst for initiating the consolidation process, as we now explain.

In the face of various institutional changes, the MCS Board foresaw emerging difficulties in maintaining current levels of funding. The additional tax burden on Memphis residents had long been a source of discontentment for some, who perceived that both school systems should be solely funded from the County-levied property tax. This issue became increasingly pronounced as the financial crisis of 2008 took hold across the region. Indeed, the impact of the financial recession led the City of Memphis Council to initiate a series of educational budget cuts for MCS schools. Further, the economic disparities between the predominantly middle-class suburbs of SCS and the poor urban MCS had continued to grow, as had the relative property

values—the basis of the property tax—which had seen suburban properties become much more valuable, on average, than those within the City limits. Finally, and most importantly, the November 2010 elections resulted in Republicans taking control of the State house. With the State Representatives for the communities that comprised SCS also Republican (unlike Memphis which is traditionally Democrat), this made the possibility of legislation that would allow SCS to reinforce its boundary with MCS – something that supporters of SCS had long sought – much more likely. This last point was presented by some members of the MCS Board as being a significant threat to the funding base of MCS if property tax funding would be retained within school district boundaries. This was probably unlikely—there has never been any indication that the taxation or school funding laws would be altered to reduce funding levels for MCS—however, it did play into the developing narrative that the lower-income Memphis population base would be unable to support the increase in property taxes that would accompany the loss of funding from the wealthier suburbs. It is also an example of the ways in which both proponents for and opponents against the change would at times employ a skewed rhetoric in order to further their positions.

These economic, racial and political differences combined to trigger an urgency for action among proponents for change on the MCS Board, elsewhere in the public administration, and among other groups in Memphis. Thus, on December 20th 2010, the MCS Board opted to renounce its charter, effectively forcing Shelby County to take full responsibility for funding and running schools previously controlled by MCS. This decision was ratified in a referendum among Memphis City residents on March 8th, 2011, in which 67% of those who voted agreed with the MCS Board’s strategy to try to force a merger of the two systems. The merger, however,

far from proceeding smoothly has subsequently been contended in various legal challenges, from both sides.

In the following sections, we develop an analysis of the ways in which proponents and opponents of the ongoing change framed the issue to their constituents, and how they utilized existing institutions to create change readiness, or conversely, to advocate for retention of the status quo. Whereas leaders of SCS and the various suburban communities that constitute its student base, hereafter referred to as the ‘suburban opponents’, were almost universally opposed to the change, MCS’ leaders did not unanimously support the merger. Furthermore, members of the county government who oversee the two school systems have also been divided on whether to consolidate. Our analysis will primarily focus on contrasting the suburban opponents’ framing of the change initiative to that of those within MCS and the county government who promoted such a change, the ‘consolidation proponents’.

The consolidation proponents.

To gain local support, the proponents primarily built an argument for the merger based on issues such as equal access to education that would, they contended, only be achieved through the securing of sufficient resources. The argument of equality was seen as particularly important among this group in order to gain acceptance from a community strongly embedded in a problematic history of racial (de)segregation. In fact, it was only in 2009 that the Supreme Court ruled that the SCS District had sufficiently demonstrated a sustained period of desegregation to warrant ‘unitary’ status, and thus be released from the federal monitoring order (MCS had achieved a similar status in 1997). This shared history of segregation inevitably serves as a primary lens for many to make sense of the ongoing situation. Indeed, several of the major

proponents of the consolidation have a strong association with the civil rights movement, and have used a civil rights-based discourse. As we note above, their motivation for initiating the change process was triggered by three key institutional changes, namely the economic crisis, the increasing disparity in income levels between County and City residents, and more critically, the shift from Democratic to Republican control of the State House. On these bases, proponents foretold a scenario in which MCS would be isolated from Shelby County and consequently mired in a landscape of racial, social and educational inequality.

Whether the risk was interpreted by Memphians as being solely financial, or as the latest chapter in the struggle for civil rights, both arguments logically called for a timely intervention that would protect the interests of Memphis residents who, it was portrayed, were in danger of being (once again) disenfranchised. Memphis City Schools Chairman Martavius Jones, for instance, in a consolidation meeting held on March 7th, 2011, expressed the urge to “fix the roof before it rains”, a metaphor that encapsulated the idea of a pending risk for which a solution needed to be found quickly. In sum, MCS leaders foresaw an apparently substantial risk that the socio-economic and racial divides existing between the City and the suburbs would become increasingly exacerbated, and that the funding base for the City’s schools would be significantly diminished. Importantly, proponents of the merger stressed two points that were particularly resonant for a majority poor, African American populous: access to education should be equal, and equality requires a fair distribution of resources. Each of these, they argued, would be threatened if the merger did not go ahead. In so doing, they created an urgency for, and clear understanding of the apparent implications of, the change that resulted in an audience who expressed their readiness for the proposed change.

Furthermore, the ideals of a democratic process played a major role in the consolidation proponents' ability to gain a wide consensus. That is, despite SCS, with a white middle-class majority, taking over MCS, with a majority of poorer African Americans, the unified school board, representing all of Shelby County, would have to be comprised of significantly more representatives of the largest conurbation, Memphis. In other words, the proposed change would not automatically see the control of the consolidated school system reside in the suburbs. The democratic process thus provided a strong argument for gaining acceptance for the change from Memphians, and also served as an instrument to ensure that power within the new system will reside with Memphis' representatives.

Finally, we note that throughout the lead up to the public vote on consolidation, proponents skillfully developed a common discourse to influence their audience into supporting the proposed change. Indeed, the three elements of rhetoric, also referred to as proofs, namely logos, pathos and ethos (Aristotle, 1991; Bizzell and Herzberg, 1990; Green, 2004; Herrick, 2001; King and Kugler, 2000; Nohria and Harrington, 1994) were used to help Memphians make sense of the ongoing program in a way that led to support of the proposed change. Logos refers to the use of reasoning; pathos appeals to an audience's emotions; and, ethos pertains to the credibility, character, and confidence of the speaker. Although the proponents did not necessarily point to race or class issues, which would certainly have triggered strong emotions (pathos) in both urban and suburban communities, the emphasis on equality in education was sufficient to suggest that the consolidation was a step toward further desegregation of the school systems, a point that probably further triggered readiness among Memphians. Rather, the motivation for change was positioned as an appeal to pure reason (logos), whereby a given problem, the risk of lacking financial resources, and a consequence, of creating a racially, socially and educationally

unequal system, calls for a specific solution: ensuring access to the funding base of the suburbs will be maintained. Such an argument was even more powerful when it was reiterated by those community leaders who had strong associations with the civil rights movement¹ (ethos).

In sum, there were strong political, economic, and social forces that, in combination, led to change being initiated by the MCS Board through the revoking its charter. The provision of equal access to education provided a strong argument for change in a community that is strongly embedded in a history of civil rights struggles. The democratic institution, and in particular the ensconced principle of proportional representation, served as an instrument to protect the power and interests of the change proponents, even though they had formally revoked their leadership role. Finally, the three elements of rhetorical argumentation were used in ways that led citizens to make sense of a complex and contentious situation in a way that led to a significant majority of them into supporting the proposed change.

The suburban opponents.

With the creation of MCS in 1869, SCS only retained responsibility for those students residing outside Memphis. Shelby County Schools had been seeking the status of special school district for several years, a status that might, so some change proponents perceive, allow it to be separated permanently from the City system. “If Shelby County Schools were to become a special school district”, SCS Board Chairman David Pickler stated, “then consolidation of schools here could never occur” (Matthews, 2010). As we note above, with the creation of a

¹ There were some members of the Memphis community who were not in favor of consolidation. The most high-profile, and influential, of these were religious and political leaders who had been involved in the Civil Rights movement and who argued that in relinquishing control of their own school system, the MCS Board was giving up its power to self-govern, a cornerstone of the Civil Rights struggle. While such voices were quite prominent early on in the debates regarding whether or not consolidation should be pursued, they became fewer and less influential over time.

Republican legislative majority in the State House, the possibility of SCS becoming a special school district increased significantly. The main arguments suburban opponents used to explain their position were based on a desire to ensure that control of education remained permanently separated from those who controlled MCS. According to Kiel (2011: 820), “statements about the ‘different type’ of student populations being served by the two systems were made to justify the separate school districts, and chaos and confusion were predicted if consolidation were to occur.” Consolidation, it was argued, would fundamentally alter the identity of the suburban schools.

Statements about identity loss come to make sense if the two groups that are expected to get together are exposed as being fundamentally different (Harzig, Juteau, and Schmitt, 2006). In this instance, as Shelby County commissioner, Steve Mulroy, pointed out in a community information meeting held on February 8th, 2011, the primary argument of opponents of the consolidation was built on the construction of an “us versus them” dichotomy. This, according to Mulroy, was based on the assertion that “SCS gets ‘A’s now; don’t ruin a good thing.” In fact, the system of school ratings was repeatedly used by opponents of the merger to argue that consolidation would result in the County’s “A-rated schools” schools being merged with City’s schools that have an overall rating of, predominantly, “F,” something that would be detrimental to the reputation of the County’s schools (see Appendix 1). In reality, for grades 3 through 8, MCS has an average score of 38% while SCS scored 56%. However, the Tennessee Department of Education gives an A to those schools that achieve more than 55%, and a F to those that score less than 40% (see Appendix 2). Thus, while there is certainly a significant disparity overall between academic performances in the two school systems, these differences are not as great as opponents to the change made out. Again, as with the arguments used by change proponents regarding the threatened loss of funding, this is another example of rhetoric being used to over-

emphasize potentially negative outcomes in order to solidify support for a position. It is worth noting that this disparity was made widely public when Memphis' media began to explicitly support the merger, something that happened towards the end of 2010. Further, opponents drew upon the metaphor of the "Trojan horse" (Locker, 2011) – the belief that merger of the two systems was a way for Memphis representatives to gain control over all of Shelby County's schools: according to Millington Mayor Richard Hodges, "They surrendered in order to conquer" (Bailey, 2011).

Another important institution that was used to oppose the merger is the regulatory framework. We mentioned earlier that the proponents for change have used democracy as an institution that will, it is assumed, secure Memphians' control over the consolidated school system. However, suburban opponents also drew upon the regulatory system by accessing the state's lawmaking apparatus. Most notably, Republican Senators Curry Todd and Mark Norris from Shelby County managed to have quickly passed in February 2011 legislation that not only delayed the consolidation, but that also offered the opportunity for municipalities across the State to create their own special school districts if they face a forced merger of the type described here. In this way, theoretically at least, communities in Shelby County can opt out of any consolidated school system and establish their own school districts.

Finally, we note the role that discourse has played in getting those in Shelby County to oppose the proposed consolidation. Primarily, this was conducted by elaborating on the rationale of "us versus them" (Mulroy, 2011), and the contrast between "one of the finest school systems" and one "that has a legacy of failure" manifested in the performance gap between MCS and SCS (see Appendix 1). This framed the comments by opponents of the change:

Pickler said the charter surrender is a power grab. “It’s about ... in my opinion, an opportunity to achieve through what I call a hostile surrender, the takeover of one of the finest school systems in the country and replace it with a board that has a legacy of failure” (Garlington, 2011).

Jerome Wright, journalist for the local *Commercial Appeal* newspaper, summarized the bases for the division between the two sides:

Those stereotypes are well known: Memphis City Schools are terrible, populated by poor children who can’t learn and who mostly live in female-led households, where the mothers don’t get involved in their children’s education. Shelby County Schools are wonderful, populated by high-achieving students from two-parent, involved families (Wright, 2011).

While this argument provided a logical ground for opposing the proposed consolidation (logos) it was also given greater poignancy as it was expressed through an emotional background of fear (pathos): “fear of losing our community identity”, and “fear of losing our educational recognized quality or greatness” (Canon, 2011). The ethos of this rhetoric, in turn, was primarily elaborated through the undermining of Memphis leaders by suggesting that they were not only architects of a system that lacked good governance but also one with a history of corruption (www.saveshelbycounty.org).

In sum, a change in the political environment offered an opportunity for SCS to become, possibly, permanently separated from MCS by gaining the status of special school district. Opposition to consolidation was mobilized around a perceived threat to the identity of Shelby County’s schools that would accompany any merger with what was presented as a vastly inferior educational system. The legislative framework provided SCS with a strategy to maintain its power. Skillful use of rhetoric served to maintain the divide between the two school systems, thereby justifying the position of rejecting the proposed consolidation.

An Institutional Analysis of Group Readiness for Change

We compared and contrasted the ways in which the two groups have drawn upon different institutions in order to promote different interpretations of identical events, and in so doing create varying levels of change readiness. Kraatz and Block (2008: 243) argued that an organization that evolves within a context of multiple institutional pressures “is subject to multiple regulatory regimes, embedded within multiple normative orders, and/or constituted by more than one cultural logic.” This creates a fragmentation of the field that in turn provides actors with the space and tools for disrupting the existing institutional order (Bucher and Strauss, 1961; Dunn and Jones, 2010; Heimer, 1999; Kraatz and Block, 2008; Lounsbury, 2007; Stryker, 2000; Washington and Ventresca, 2004). Our case not only highlights this phenomenon whereby organizations have to contend with multiple institutional pressures, it also shows how competing actors draw on established institutions to influence the readiness for change of actors in the field. This leads to our first proposition:

Proposition 1: In a fragmented field, readiness for change will likely be determined by the skillful presentation of prominent institutions by influential actors.

Furthermore, our work expands research on readiness for change to a level of analysis that has received little attention, namely the level of collective cognitions. It has been pointed out that existing scales used to examine organizational members’ readiness for change are too individually-focused, thereby failing to account for the ways in which cognitions are socially constructed (Armenakis and Harris, 1993; Bouckenoghe and Devos, 2008; Jones et al., 2005; Lewin, 1951; Walinga, 2008). Such an approach is particularly problematic if the concept of change readiness is to examine large-scale change programs such as mergers or acquisitions. By examining the relationship between individuals and their institutional environments, our work

has shed light on the importance of language in mediating this relationship. Indeed, while two groups may evolve in similar environments, we see that competing actors, with competing interests, shape their arguments in ways that induce strongly divergent perceptions of the same event.

More precisely, in our case, the opponents to consolidation built primarily on cultural differences between those residing in urban and suburban areas in order to legitimate the existing divide between the two communities or institutionalize an “us versus them” mentality. However, proponents attempted to deinstitutionalize those perceptions of difference. This view is consistent with the notion of readiness for change that bears a more positive approach than the concept of resistance to change (Armenakis and Harris, 2009). Indeed, whereas most research on mergers and acquisitions has pointed to cultural differences as a major reason underlying failed mergers (e.g., Buono, Bowditch, and Lewis, 1985; Cartwright and Cooper, 1993; Chatterjee, Lubatkin, Schweiger, and Weber 1992; Datta, 1991; Sales and Mirvis, 1984; Walter, 1985; Weber and Schweiger, 1992; Weber, Shenkar, and Raveh, 1996), and while several researchers have highlighted the need to communicate effectively during transformations (Armenakis and Harris, 2002; Cornett-De Vito and Friedman, 1995; Demers et al., 2003; Heracleous, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991), including mergers and acquisitions (Vaara, 2002), little is known of the ways in which managers can use language to emphasize similarities between two merging organizations.

Central to this use of language is the narrator’s ability to define organizational change in different ways (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000; Vaara, 2002). However, as shown in our case, attempts by the proponents to build on similarities between those County residents within

Memphis and those outside the City not only required skills in presenting the mechanics of changing, but also the construction of a new knowledge structure (e.g., presenting the same information on academic performance through a perspective that minimizes the differences between SCS and MCS) in order to spread the message that the two communities are not as different as perceived. Thus we propose that:

Proposition 2: The level of readiness for change will have a direct correlation with the degree to which the prevailing discourse highlights similarities, rather than differences, between current and future institutional arrangements.

Our case also points to a major implication for readiness for change in getting two groups, departments, or organizations to interact or merge. Indeed, while two merging organizations might be likely to agree on the same organizational goals, understanding how each perceives the path to achieving such goals may help predict readiness for change. In our case, proponents of the change posited that funding was critical for achieving acceptable levels of academic performance, whereas opponents argued that academic performance requires more than material resources, such as good governance and parental involvement in their child's education. Therefore, while both SCS and MCS have ostensibly the same goal, improved educational performance, they are divided by the means that are perceived as being required to achieve it.

Merton (1938) suggested that ends, though they serve to rally individuals around a common structure of shared meanings, thereby allowing for organization of a social order, are not the exclusive mode of coordination. Instead, a social order generally defines the acceptable means required to achieve such goals, and those means become institutionalized within the moral

or regulatory framework of the group. Merton further offered that an exclusive focus on means is likely to influence social groups into being “virtually obsessive” about them, thereby leading those involved to forget about the original purpose (1938: 38). However, a similar focus on ends rather than on means may also be detrimental. Merton (1938: 38) therefore concludes:

An effective equilibrium between the two phases of the social structure is maintained as long as satisfaction accrues to individuals who conform to both constraints, viz., satisfactions from the achievement of the goals and satisfactions emerging directly from the institutionally canalized modes of striving to attain these ends.

More recently, Wooley (2009: 500) argued that a focus on means rather than ends “inhibits the ability of teams to adapt in a dynamic environment.” Kiel (2011: 845), in reference to the school desegregation in Memphis, makes a similar point:

The successful, though limited desegregation of MCS in 1961, organized through the cooperation of a broad coalition with the common goal of avoiding negative national publicity, provides an example of what can be accomplished with cooperation and recognition of shared interests. In contrast, the push for busing without regard to educational good ... is an illustration of what can happen when polarized positions and a focus on means (busing) rather than ends (improved educational opportunity) dominate decision making.

In sum, in line with Wooley (2009) and Kiel (2011) recommendation to focus on ends, and in contradiction of Merton’s (1938) prescription to achieve an ‘equilibrium’, we argue that an emphasis on the ‘common goal’ will be more likely to increase change readiness. However, because members are likely to be organized around specific means associated with such goals, change leaders will likely need to deemphasize the differences in approaches to achieving the goal. This forms the basis of our third proposition:

Proposition 3: Readiness for change is more likely to be achieved when the change discourse focuses on the ends rather than on the means to achieve such ends, assuming that these ends are not seen as oppositional.

Our work also stresses the importance of language in creating readiness. Whereas previous research has examined the most effective ways of crafting a change message (Armenakis et al., 1993, 1999; Armenakis and Harris, 2002), we expand this view by highlighting the fact that change leaders' discourses are shaped by the institutional environment in which they are embedded. In other words, while the change message is critical to bring about readiness, readiness at a collective level will be achieved insofar as leaders are able to build on an existing structure of shared meanings. This point is consistent with Wittgenstein's (1968: 5-6) assertion that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." Indeed, where rhetoric is recognized as an instrument of power (Heracleous, 2002; Keith and Lundberg, 2008), capable of persuading broad audiences, it is also constrained by the institutional environment within which those audiences are embedded (Scott, 2008). Furthermore, while it is widely accepted that a rhetorical speech will be effective inasmuch as it builds on a set of shared meanings (Green, 2004; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Sillince, 2005), thereby minimizing the sensemaking gap between current and future institutional arrangements, we know less about the most effective combinations of existing institutions and the three elements of rhetorical argumentation. We suspect that a fragmented field provides change agents with the opportunity for influence through an emphasis of one or more institutions. However, the appeal to specific institutions might also constitute a constraint in that it may direct the orator into emphasizing one type of rhetorical proof over another. Our case indicates that both proponents and opponents have been successful in persuading their audiences, the first building on the argument that education should

be equal, combined with a rational appeal, whereas the second calls for protecting community identity and educational reputation with an emotional appeal. Thus, in proposition four we state that:

Proposition 4: When rhetorical proofs are appropriately located within prominent institutions, change agents will be more likely to positively influence individuals' readiness for change.

It is also important to acknowledge that although proponents in our case have largely strived to avoid emotional appeals such as those associated with race and class, the link between equal education and the underlying assumption that equality stands for addressing the problematic of racial and class inequity provides further strength to the argument. In other words, the emotional aspect of the argument is ever-present even though, superficially at least, consolidation proponents primarily refer to a logical approach. This point highlights the importance not only of emotional appeals in persuading an audience, and more critically in bringing about change (Green, 2004), but also of the importance, for researchers, of performing a thorough examination of rhetorical argumentation. Consequently:

Proposition 5: A combination of rational argument based on prominent institutions will positively influence members' readiness for change inasmuch as the underlying assumptions of the argument triggers a positive emotional response.

Finally, studies attempting to relate rhetorical argumentation to change focus primarily on identifying those elements – logos, pathos and ethos – that are likely to bring about change (Green, 2004). Less is known, however, about how such elements may hinder change and create ‘unreadiness’ (Cinute, Duxbury, and Higgins, 2009). In our case, we see that the opponents to

consolidation primarily built on negative emotions (pathos) with claims that relate to the fear of losing the community identity or the educational quality attached to the community. In fact, the consolidation might just as well not lead to either loss of community identity or lower educational quality, but suburban leaders play strongly on the negative aspect of the proposed change, namely the uncertainty attached to such a change. Consolidation proponents also integrate uncertainty into their discourses, but they do so in a significantly different fashion. Referring back to the roof metaphor, whether it is going to rain, and whether the roof will leak, is as uncertain as the loss of identity for a community. However, proponents do not emphasize the uncertainty approach of the ongoing change; rather, they claim that while they do not know whether and when it is going to rain, one certainty is that if they fail to fix the roof, the risk of a leak is always pending. In other words, when opponents of change build an emotional argument by emphasizing the uncertainty of a situation (pathos), proponents try to minimize this uncertainty by emphasizing the inherent logic of the position (logos).

Uncertainty has been widely shown to be one of the strongest triggers of resistance, mostly because whenever established routines or embedded schemas are challenged, organizational members are likely to be affected by feelings of fear and anxiety (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, and Callan, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia, Thomas, Clark, and Chittipeddi, 1994; Isabella, 1990; Labianca, Gray, and Brass, 2000; Louis, 1980; Poole, Gioia, and Gray, 1989). Therefore, we offer that unreadiness for change is more likely to be associated with discourses that mainly rely on emotional appeals (pathos). This leads to our final proposition:

Proposition 6: A combination of pathos with prominent institutions will positively influence members' unreadiness for change.

Conclusion and Implications

The aim of this study was to show the ways in which an institutional perspective can broaden our understanding of change readiness. Walinga (2008: 6-7) indicates that while scholars interested in readiness for change have identified several key components of the change readiness process such as the stages of change, the interactive and interpretive aspects of coping with change, and the cognitive processes of change, few studies have succeeded in considering “the infinite variables at play within the individual system and the infinite beliefs and values that arise from a multitude of historical, psychological, emotional, biological, and situational factors.” Our analysis of a school district consolidation illustrates the benefits of using an institutional perspective that allows for a more integrative approach of change readiness, one that takes into account the process through which individuals' cognitions are shaped by broader contextual factors. While each organization evolves within a specific institutional framework, the ways in which change leaders will build upon existing institutions is likely to influence individuals' sensemaking processes, and by extension their readiness for change. Furthermore, although the institutional setting may be sufficiently fragmented to provide an opportunity for change, it also constitutes a constraint (Kraatz and Block, 2008; Dunn and Jones, 2010) that change agents will need to account for when shaping their change message. We now turn to the theoretical and practical implications of our work.

Theoretical Implications

There are several theoretical implications of our work. First, we have pointed to the importance of undertaking an analysis of the institutional setting that shapes collective cognitions in order to better understand why individuals, groups, organizations, industries, fields or societies are ready or not for change. In particular, we have shown how a fragmented field may open various spaces to change agents for either creating change readiness, or on the contrary, for mobilizing resistance to it. Future research should therefore take a systematic approach aimed at identifying those institutions that may play a role in shaping cognitions during change events.

Second, our work underscores the importance of discourse in bringing about successful change. Unveiling discursive structures can reveal the relative ways in which institutions can be used to develop a readiness for change. Further, discourse analyses can also show who has power within a field, and how that power can be used to create a context that facilitates, or opposes, change.

Third, by expanding the range of analysis to the group level, our work suggests that the concept of readiness should be understood in the context of a broader universe of change dynamics. Consequently, change readiness can be developed, conceptually, to provide insights into mergers, acquisitions, takeovers, and other transformations involving the combining of multiple entities.

Practical implications

Our work has stressed the importance of being particularly knowledgeable of those institutions that play a key role in an organization or field. While newly hired managers or change consultants are generally aware of the importance of becoming particularly savvy about

an organization's culture (Miles, 2010; Reger, Mullane, Gustafson, and DeMarie, 1994), the criticality of understanding the institutional context is rarely considered. As Barrett et al. (1995: 369) point out, "Organizational researchers should take a historical and longitudinal perspective in studying how linguistic forms are inherited, how these forms constrain and facilitate thought and action, and how they change through time." By the same token, change agents should strive to understand those institutions they will be able to build upon in order to create readiness.

This point also highlights the importance of creating a change language that minimizes the sensemaking gap between a current familiar situation and a future state. More precisely, discourses that build on similarities between current and future arrangements may enhance readiness. Similarly, we have indicated that means, more so than goals, are those elements of an organization or social order that are likely to be institutionalized. Challenging institutionalized practices has been shown to be a daunting task (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Scott, 2008). Thus, one way of enhancing change readiness may be to emphasize the purposes of a proposed change rather than the means by which it should be achieved. Through subsequent participation, the means that may be deemed most appropriate to achieve such goals might be more easily negotiated and reevaluated.

In closing, we feel that change readiness scholars have laid an impressive foundation. From this point, if the concept is to develop, we need to expand our conceptual understanding of what change readiness is, and what it might be, by embracing synergistic theoretical approaches that may substantively inform current debates. In this paper, we have examined how institutional theory can inform our understanding of change readiness; we hope that other scholars will take these ideas forward, both in terms of refining the ways in which institutional theory is used, and

also by drawing upon other macro-level organizational theories that may be able to provide additional insights.

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Table 1. Elements of readiness for change in the consolidation of MCS-SCS

	MCS - Proponents	SCS - Opponents
Primary motivation for change/status quo	Funding	Authority
Demographics: - Number of students - Number of schools - Student racial composition - Funding sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State • Tax properties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paid by all county residents ○ Paid only by Memphians • Other - Economically disadvantaged students - Per pupil funding	108,317 ¹ 201 85. 0% African American ¹ 7.1% White 6.5% Hispanic 1.3% Asian/Pacific Islander 0.1% Nat. American/Alaskan \$428M (49. 5%) ³ \$255M (29. 5%) ³ \$84M (9. 7%) ³ \$97M (11. 2%) ³ 87. 2% ¹ \$10,767 ¹	48,243 ² 52 37. 8% African American ² 52.3% White 4.6% Hispanic 4.9% Asian/Pac. Islander 0.4% Nat. American/Alaskan \$174M (50. 9%) ⁴ \$115M (33. 6%) ⁴ N/A ⁴ \$53M (15. 5%) ⁴ 37. 1% ² \$8,439 ²
Political orientation	Democrat	Republican
Mission	Provide equal access to education	Provide quality education
Major concerns	Growing impoverishment. Lack of funding	Loss of social identity Loss of educational reputation
Interests	Ensure financial sustainability	Maintain the local control over the suburban schools
Metaphor of change	The roof that will need repair; a machine that needs fixing (Marshak, 1993)	The Trojan horse; the enemy; the threat to the established order (Gozzi, 2000)
Role of time in the change program	Urgent to avoid funding problems	Stall to postpone effects of consolidation

Sources:

1. Memphis City Schools 2010 Report

Card:<http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3756072173928960::NO::>

2. Shelby County Schools 2010 Report Card:

<http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3756072173928960::NO::>

3. Memphis City Schools Budget, <http://www.mcsk12.net/budget.pdf>

4. Shelby County Schools Budget <http://www.scsk12.org/SCS/pages/GEN-FUND-BUDGET-10-11.pdf>

Table 2. Proportion of African American students in schools governed by MCS and SCS (2010)

Percentage of AA children	MCS (number of schools)	MCS (Cumulative %)	SCS (number of schools)	SCS (Cumulative %)
95-100	116	57.7	0	0
90-94.9	20	67.7	2	3.8
85-89.9	17	76.1	3	9.6
80-84.9	15	83.6	1	11.5
75-79.9	3	85.1	0	11.5
70-74.9	3	86.6	0	11.5
65-69.9	3	88.1	3	17.3
60-64.9	0	88.1	1	19.2
55-59.9	1	88.6	2	23.0
50-54.9	1	89.1	0	23.0
45-49.9	4	91.1	5	32.7
40-44.9	1	91.5	3	38.5
35-39.9	3	93.0	1	40.4
30-34.9	1	93.5	4	48.1
25-29.9	2	94.5	3	53.8
20-24.9	3	96.0	7	67.3
15-19.9	1	96.5	4	75.0
10-14.9	1	97.0	9	92.3
5-9.9	0	97.0	1	94.2
0-4.9	0	97.0	3	100
Not reported	6	100	0	100
Total	201	100	52	100

Data collated from Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools 2010 Report Cards
(Available at: <http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3756072173928960::NO::>;
Accessed 26th March 2012)

Table 3. Proportion of economically disadvantaged students in schools governed by MCS and SCS (2010)

Percentage of Economically disadvantaged children	MCS (number of schools)	MCS ¹ (Cumulative %)	SCS (number of schools)	SCS (Cumulative %)
95-100	95	58.6	1	1.9
90-94.9	25	74.1	1	3.8
85-89.9	15	83.3	0	3.8
80-84.9	6	87.0	1	5.8
75-79.9	7	91.4	4	13.5
70-74.9	3	93.2	5	23.1
65-69.9	1	93.8	3	28.8
60-64.9	0	93.8	0	28.8
55-59.9	3	95.7	0	28.8
50-54.9	0	95.7	0	28.8
45-49.9	3	97.5	4	36.5
40-44.9	1	98.1	2	40.4
35-39.9	1	98.8	3	46.2
30-34.9	1	99.4	2	50.0
25-29.9	0	99.4	5	59.6
20-24.9	0	99.4	5	69.2
15-19.9	1	100.0	4	76.9
10-14.9	0	100.0	8	92.3
5-9.9	0	100.0	2	96.2
0-4.9	0	100.0	2	100.0
Not reported	39	-	0	100.0
Total	201	100	52	100

¹ Because of the high number of MCS schools not reporting these data, cumulative percentages for MCS are calculated as a proportion of those 162 schools that did report.

Data collated from Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools 2010 Report Cards (Available at: <http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3756072173928960::NO:::> Accessed 26th March 2012)

Appendix 1. 2010 Academic Achievement Grades

Grades 3-8: TCAP Criterion Referenced Academic Achievement

	MCS		SCS		State	
CRT	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
Math	40	D	55	A	49	C
Reading/Language	38	F	55	A	49	C
Social Studies	38	F	58	A	51	B
Science	35	F	56	A	49	C

Source: TDOE Report Card 2010. Tennessee Department of Education.

Appendix 2. Grade Scale

Grade	Status	Achievement Grades 3-8			
		Reading/ Language	Math	Science	Social Studies
A	Exemplary	≥ 55	≥ 55	≥ 55	≥ 55
B	Above Average	50-54	50-54	50-54	50-54
C	Average	45-49	45-49	45-49	45-49
D	Below Average	40-44	40-44	40-44	40-44
F	Deficient	≤ 39	≤ 39	≤ 39	≤ 39

Source: TDOE Report Card 2010. Tennessee Department of Education.